

The archive of New Zealand music

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In Fiona McAlpine's interesting article describing her experiences in Paris music libraries she states, "Nothing can replace work with the original manuscripts". She has been working on the songs of mediaeval *trouvères*. In future years people will be working on the music of New Zealand composers. How splendid to know that with the recently established Archive of New Zealand Music at the Alexander Turnbull Library they, too, will be able to use original manuscripts. Many will be xeroxed copies, but there will also be much original material.

In 1974 the Composers' Association of New Zealand (CANZ) had its inaugural meeting in Wellington. Douglas Lilburn proposed that composers should consider bequeathing, by will, their scores to some suitable library for posterity, and consider the possibility of depositing them in this library on long-term loan, under special conditions, during their lifetime. This idea came as a surprise to most of the composers present. Many seemed astonished to think that anyone would want their scores for purposes other than performance. Everyone was enthusiastic about the idea. The question was—which library? It seemed to Douglas Lilburn and myself that the most suitable one was the Alexander Turnbull Library, especially as the Librarian there had been informed of our plans and expressed great interest. So the motion was passed that Alexander Turnbull Library be the receiving library, and a small sub-committee was set up to make an official approach to the Librarian.

The result of this was that potential problems concerning the lending and actual use of such scores were resolved, and the library

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sent forms to all composer members of CANZ asking them to give, or deposit on long-term loan, their manuscripts (or copies of them), published scores, records, tapes, letters, programmes, reviews, photographs, and any other relevant material. This has been followed up by a vigorous publicity drive in the national press and the Librarian is pleased with the results so far. The new collection is called the Archive of New Zealand music. The Librarian has set up a Music Advisory Panel, most of the members of which also belong to CANZ.

Many composers have in the past deposited their music on long-term loan with the Radio New Zealand Music Library (formerly the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation Music Library). Reasons for this may vary. In some cases composers have left the country for a period and felt that their scores should be somewhere accessible. Radio New Zealand (formerly the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation) often needs New Zealand music for special programmes, both within and outside New Zealand. Should they want something from a composer who is overseas at the time, he could write and give permission for the use of a piece already in their Music Library. Whatever the reasons, this library has in fact held by far the largest collection in the country of New Zealand composers' manuscript scores. This became quite clear when I compiled the *Union List of Music Manuscripts in New Zealand Libraries* (Continuo vol. 2 no. 2, June 1972).

The NZBC were asked if they would consider the transfer of some of these scores to the Archive, and they agreed. CANZ members are being approached for their permission for the transfer of their material, and a fairly large number of these scores should soon be at the Archive.

People have been writing music in New Zealand since at least 1850. Music publishing has always been difficult to achieve here because of the lack of music publishers, and this gives manuscript material an added significance. Published music is, of course, also welcomed at the Archive, but for many years to come it is likely that the largest proportion of the works the Archive hopes to receive from composers of serious music will be in manuscript form, either original or xeroxed.

We have let 125 years go by, but fortunately we are a small country, our library system is well organised, and not many people compose music. It is not too late. We have not yet got a music librarian at the National Library; but we have a Union Catalogue of Music Scores which other countries envy us. We are told that the new National Library building is to have listening facilities of a quite sophisticated nature. (Who knows, perhaps one day it may have a beautiful, dignified Douglas Lilburn Room, like the Pacini Archive at the public library of Pescia!) We have an Archive of Maori and Pacific Music at the University of Auckland. And now we have an Archive of New Zealand Music. We really are starting to get somewhere.